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 ON PAGE A-5

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General in CBS trial denies faking figures

NEW YORK (AP) — A retired general who served as an intelligence chief under Gen. William Westmoreland flatly denied a CBS documentary's assertion that he blocked and tampered with intelligence data during the Vietnam War.

Lt. Gen. Daniel Graham also disputed the network's contention that the strength of the enemy's Tet offensive of January 1968 showed military intelligence had underestimated the Viet Cong.

Gen. Graham made the assertions under cross-examination in Gen. Westmoreland's libel suit against the network.

Gen. Westmoreland, who is retired, is suing over a 1982 documentary, "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception," which asserted he deliberately undercounted enemy troops, leaving President Lyndon B. Johnson and the public unprepared for the size of the Tet offensive.

In his testimony yesterday, Gen. Graham recalled that Gen. Westmoreland once asked him to join in filing the libel suit to prevent CBS from delaying it until Gen. Westmoreland died.

He said Gen. Westmoreland, 70, thought "it was a good idea to have two of us."

Gen. Graham said he offered to join in the suit "if that was necessary to prevent delay tactics" in which CBS would try to "wait until the general died." Graham said that as a younger man, "I was likely to outlive him."

Gen. Graham, who did not give his age, said Gen. Westmoreland's lawyer later dissuaded him from becoming a plaintiff.

On Wednesday, Graham testified that the Tet offensive showed the enemy was "literally scraping the bottom of the barrel."

Enemy troops included young villagers with no idea how to use their weapons and soldiers with recently stitched wounds, he told the U.S. District Court jury.

He said he had told CBS correspondent Mike Wallace, a defendant in the suit, about this during an interview before the documentary was broadcast.

Gen. Graham denied the documentary's charge that he blocked reports showing North Vietnamese infiltration increased to 20,000 troops a month late in 1967.

"There was no indication of that," he said, referring to the figure.

He also denied the documentary's assertion that he tampered with the memory of a computer after the Tet offensive in order to justify earlier reports of enemy troop strength.

Gen. Graham testified the poor condition of enemy troops during the Tet offensive showed the military's pre-Tet estimate of enemy troop strength was "in the ballpark."

According to Gen. Graham, Gen. Westmoreland's command overestimated the number of enemy troops.

He said, for example, a category of enemy troops called the "political cadre" should not have been included in the overall estimate of enemy forces.

"Politicians are normally not arranged in battalions," he said.

CBS attorney David Boies then asked, "What do these politicians do?"

Gen. Graham answered, "Collect taxes. . . . They'd round up all the people in the village and deliver some horrible speech about Lenin and Marx."